

REMARKS OF REPRESENTATIVE EDWARD J. MARKEY (D-MA)
PRESS CONFERENCE
ANNOUNCEMENT OF SITES FOR HOMEBOUND DEMONSTRATION
PROJECT
JUNE 3, 2004

Thank you, Secretary Thompson and Administrator McClellan, for your support of this important homebound demonstration project.

The project announced today will enable some of Medicare's most vulnerable beneficiaries to leave home for a child's dance recital; for a trip to a college football game; or for any reason that they choose - and their fragile medical conditions may permit.

These beneficiaries and their loved ones will not have to fear that their next outing could result in the termination of the home health benefits that they depend on to survive.

I'd like to thank Congressman Chris Smith and Senator Susan Collins, who have been indispensable partners in our campaign to free permanently and severely disabled homebound beneficiaries from restrictions on their freedom of movement.

Senator Bob Dole has called the reform of the homebound definition “The right thing to do for America.” Today, we’ll hear from a courageous man from Georgia who represents everything that is right ABOUT America.

David Jayne is the founder of the National Coalition to Amend the Medicare Homebound Restriction. When his own home health benefits were terminated because he remained active in his community despite the onset of ALS, David created a nationwide movement to lift restrictions on homebound patients around the country.

I also would like to acknowledge the contributions of Henry Claypool, Bob Williams, Kathy Thompson and Bob Wardwell – thank you for your expertise and your dedication.

Today’s announcement is an important milestone in our effort to ensure that homebound beneficiaries with permanent and severe conditions such as last-stage Alzheimer’s Disease, ALS, and Parkinson’s are not imprisoned in their own homes by Medicare rules.

Patients with these types of debilitating conditions are not trying to “game” the Medicare system or unnecessarily extend the period of time that they receive home health benefits. The very nature of their disability requires these patients to receive significant care on a permanent basis; Medicare rules should not compound the isolation caused by the disability by forcing these patients to remain shut inside their homes as a cost of receiving the home health benefits that they so desperately need.

I welcome this project as an opportunity to demonstrate that lifting the homebound restrictions on beneficiaries with chronic and severe conditions will not significantly increase costs or negatively affect the quality of care that beneficiaries receive. In fact, I believe that lifting the restrictions will make a world of difference to these vulnerable patients and their families.

I am hopeful that, at the end of this demonstration, it will be clear that the homebound restriction should be lifted for all permanently and severely disabled Medicare patients across the country, who must cope daily with the challenges of diseases such

as ALS, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and others that require daily assistance from a caregiver.

I know that groups such as the Massachusetts chapter of the ALS Association; Home & Health Care Association of Massachusetts; Partners HomeCare; and Visiting Nurse Associations across Massachusetts stand ready to work with the Department to ensure that all the beneficiaries who are eligible to participate in the demonstration project are informed about it and enrolled.

Once again, thank you Secretary Thompson and Administrator McClellan for your support in making the demonstration project a reality. I look forward to working with you as the project is rolled out and implemented in the states.